

Job 17: 1-16; “Who Will Shake Hands with Me?”, Sermon # 29 in the series entitled – “Remember to Magnify His Work”, Delivered by Pastor Paul Rendall on February 5th, 2023, in the Afternoon Worship Service.

This chapter is the second part of Job’s response to Eliphaz’ 2nd response to him. By this time his spirit was broken and he says that the grave was ready for him. Job’s three friends have not helped Job at all during this time of his great grief and pain. Rather, their speeches have aggravated the situation that he is in, greatly. He says to them in verse 2 that they are actually engaging in a form of mocking him when they said the things that they did, about his being a hypocrite and his needing to repent when he was trying to defend his own integrity. He says that his eye dwelt on their provocation.

At such a time, what you are called to do as a godly person is to persevere in your faith, in situations where your Christian friends have not understood what you are going through, and they disapprove of you. This is what we need to think about together. So, 1st of all – Let’s think about who will shake hands with us when we are misunderstood. (verses 3-5) 2nd – We will think about who gives us our strength to have clean hands. (verses 6-9) And 3rd – We will think together about who sees our hope. (verse 10-16)

1st of all – Let’s think about who will shake hands with us when we are misunderstood.

Job says in verse 3 – “Now put down a pledge for me with Yourself.” “Who is he who will shake hands with me?” “For You have hidden their heart from understanding; therefore You will not exalt them.” “He who speaks flattery to his friends, even the eyes of his children will fail.” In verse 3, although Job appears to be speaking to Eliphaz, he is really looking beyond him to speak to God Himself, when he says – “Now put down a pledge for me with Yourself.” “Who is he who will shake hands with me?” He means – Among his friends. Well, none of them would shake hands with him; that is, to approve of his words or his conduct in this situation. And so Job turns to God for an answer. He turns to God for his help.

He wants God to put down a pledge for him with Himself that He will do Him good. He wants God to take up his cause because he knows that his cause is God’s cause; the cause of righteousness and truth. He wants God to shake hands or strike hands with him. In the King James it says – “Lay down now, put me in a surety with thee; who is he that will strike hands with me?” In the New American Standard it says – “Lay down, now, a pledge for me with Yourself; Who is there that will be my guarantor?” What he is saying is this: Will you tell me, O God, who will be a surety for me with Yourself, seeing as my friends are not willing even to look me in the eye and shake hands with me as their friend?

What Job was asking for spiritually, even though he did not know all of the specifics, was for God to appoint Christ and to send Him to be the One who he could strike hands with; the One who would be His surety. Job knew, evidently by Divine Revelation or by spiritual intuition, that God could and would put down such a pledge for him, or he would not ask for such a thing. He knew that God would eventually send Christ into the world, and that Christ would be his Savior, His Redeemer, His Deliverer, His Helper, and His Friend.

I want you to see from this, that it is on this basis that you will be able to persevere in faith and righteousness. Even when people around you believe that you are in sin, but really you are not. You may know it, but your friends do not. But God knows all things. And He is willing to put down a pledge for you, as you entrust yourself to Him. You can ask for His help to be given to you, even when He appears to have hidden the truth of your integrity from your closest friends.

You can pray the prayer of David in Psalm 26, verses 1-4: “Vindicate me, O Lord, for I have walked in my integrity.” “I have also trusted in the Lord; I shall not slip.” “Examine me, O Lord, and prove me; try my mind and my heart.” “For Your lovingkindness is before my eyes, and I have walked in Your truth.”

But notice what Job says to God in verse 4? “For You have hidden their heart from understanding; therefore You will not exalt them.” What amazing words these are. They show us that even though Job’s 3 friends were godly men, that God had hidden their hearts from understanding what was taking place here with Job. God had hidden from them the truth that Satan had attacked Job because He had been boasting to Satan that there was none like Job upon the earth; a righteous man who feared God and was turning away from evil. God hid this from Job’s three friends so that He could fulfill all of His good purpose, to establish Job in the integrity of his righteousness before all men.

We need to see from this that the glory for all of our being able to be righteous people must go to God, and not to any man. God may boast in Job’s righteousness, but Job cannot boast in his own righteousness. Neither would God allow any man to boast of Job’s righteousness. God will sometimes hide the truth of our righteousness from the hearts of our brethren in order to keep them and ourselves from pride. God keeps us from understanding all the truth about ourselves lest we boast in anything besides the Lord Himself and the grace that He has given us. In this holy way, we become people of integrity.

When we humbly go about to do His will, He has then fulfilled His purpose. When we justify Him in all that He ordains and permits in our life, then we are really making progress in holiness and righteousness. Listen to Psalm 37, verses 5-9. “Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.” “He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.” “Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him; do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who brings wicked schemes to pass.” “Cease from anger, and forsake wrath; do not fret – it only causes harm.”

Oh, that Job’s friends could have spoken words like these to him. They would have done him a real favor. They would have then been really speaking words what he needed to hear; these wonderful words of promise. And in speaking them they would have truly showed themselves to be His friends, and they would have glorified God in the process. Let us see, however, that our Lord Jesus Christ is the One who has stood surety for His people both Old Testament and New. From before time began, He struck hands with the Father concerning all who the Father would give Him, and all who would come to Him in faith. He covenanted and agreed with Him to fulfill all of God’s holy law on our behalf. He would become a High Priest forever on our behalf. The Father confirmed this with an oath.

Listen to how it is worded in Hebrews 7, verses 20-25: “And inasmuch as He was not made priest without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: ‘The Lord has sworn and will not relent, ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek’), “By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.” “Also there were many priests because they were prevented by death from continuing.” “But He because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood.” “Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.”

Ah, how great is the intercession of Christ, my brethren. He is the surety of a better covenant than the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is spiritually written upon our hearts because of Christ’s blood which shed for us, and His righteousness which was done in holy perfection. He

pledged His heart, and His life's blood on our behalf. It will always be efficacious in the worst of our circumstances. So it would be, for Job in this situation.

2nd – Let's think about Who gives us our strength to have clean hands. (verses 6-9)

“But He has made me a byword of the people, and I have become one in whose face men spit.” “My eye has also grown dim because of sorrow, and all my members are like shadows.” “Upright men are astonished at this, and the innocent stirs himself up against the hypocrite.” “Yet the righteous will hold to his way, and he who has clean hands will be stronger and stronger.” Verse 6 in the King James is very interesting. It says – “He hath made me also a byword of the people; and aforetime I was as a tabret.”

Job is saying that he knew that he was being spoken about by the people in all the surrounding area as suffering these things because he was a sinful man. Whereas before, he had been the delight of the people and when he went out into public that they would express their joy at seeing him; welcoming him with singing and dancing and beating on tabrets, musical instruments. This would express their gladness. He then goes on to talk about the deterioration of this physical body. His eye was dim by reason of sorrow, and all of his members had only a shadow of their former strength.

He says that upright people, people who were upright in their hearts, these people were astonished by what had happened to him, and what he had become in comparison to his former self. Those who were innocent would be stirred up to speak against the hypocrisy of the way that he was being treated by his friends. But he himself, and all righteous people, will hold to their way of doing what was right, even as God has commanded in His word. And as a result, the person who has clean hands will be blessed with the grace of God to become stronger and stronger in their faith and obedience to God. Truly, this is one of the finest statements on the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints that exists in the Bible.

The phrase – “He who has clean hands” refers to a believer in God who studies to do what is morally pure and right in the sight of God and men. He lives by faith in the Son of God who loved him and gave Himself for him. He knows, as it says in Psalm 19, verse 12 and 13 that he needs to pray and ask God that he might be cleansed from secret faults and kept back from presumptuous sins, so that they will not have dominion over him. He knows that if he prays in this way and thinks in this way, guarding his heart day and night, he will be innocent of great transgression. That is, he is continually trusting in the strength of God and the power of God to keep His soul as he perseveres in doing what is right.

He will be clean because he is a person who believes that he can only become good person and walk uprightly before God because he seeks the Lord so that He might be righteous before Him. He will be clean because he is holding fast to God's word, and he will be made clean by the word that Christ has spoken to Him; the word of God, that performs a work in the hearts of those who believe it. The person who believes the gospel has the righteousness of faith in Christ. And this leads him to study more and more how to obey God in a way which will be glorifying to Him. He prays – “Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer.”

Another good reference to this is found in Psalm 24, verses 3-6. “Who may ascend into the hill of the Lord?” “Or who may stand in His holy place?” “He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully.” “He shall receive blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.” “This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face.” So the person who can ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand in His holy place are those persons who have clean hands and a pure heart. That is, after

they die, they will be able to ascend and go to heaven and be with the Lord there forever because they actually have lived a morally clean and pure life.

This does not, by any means, mean that they have lived a perfect life, being perfect in all of their thoughts, motives, and actions before God and men. But it most certainly means that it is something that they strive for. That is what perseverance is. It is striving to continue in the faith of Jesus Christ. A true Christian strives to make progress in righteousness and holiness. And because a Christian has received grace from the Father and the Son, they will also have the spiritual strength coming to them from the Holy Spirit's continually working in their mind and heart to do God's will.

They will hold to their way; that is the their way of learning to walk on the path of righteousness. And in learning to cultivate this relationship with Jesus they will grow stronger and stronger in terms of their walking in His way. Believing in Jesus, following Jesus, and knowing the reality of His grace and Spirit working in your heart, this is the New and Living Way for the person that knows God through Him.

3rd – We will think together about Who sees our hope. (verse 10-16)

“But please, come back again, all of you, for I shall not find one wise man among you.” “My days are past, my purposes are broken off, even the thoughts of my heart.” “They change the night into day; ‘The light is near,’ they say, in the face of darkness.” “If I wait for the grave as my house, if I make my bed in the darkness, if I say to corruption, ‘You are my father,’ and to the worm, ‘You are my mother and my sister,’ where then is my hope?” “As for my hope, who can see it?” “Will they go down to the gates of Sheol?” “Shall we have rest together in the dust?”

Job was a wise instructor to these men who were so unable to minister to him. He says to them – Come back again, bring more of your vain arguments, but you will prove nothing of value to me. For I am ready to die and there is no hope that I shall ever come back and know any blessing in this life. How do we comfort those who are going through great trials? How do we comfort those who are near death? How do we give them hope that they shall have real rest from their afflictions?

It must be that we speak to them of God and Christ. It is God who has pledged his very heart to us in His giving us His Son. He will do all things well through His Son. He will bring us back from our trial if it is His purpose. Or He will bring us to eternal glory through Christ. In Jeremiah chapter 30 it says – “And their governor shall come from their midst; then I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach Me; For who is this who pledged his heart to approach Me says the Lord?” “You shall be My people and I will be your God.”

And Colossians 3: 1-4 – “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.” “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.” “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” “When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.” This was what would have happened had Job died at that time. But it was not God's purpose. God's purpose was to restore the fortunes of Job in good time. His hope would not be lost. It would be established because of Christ.

He would bless the latter days of Job more than his beginning. Twice as many sheep and camels, oxen and female donkeys. He would have seven sons and three daughters to help make up for the loss of the former. He would have his health restored and live 140 years more after this, and see his children and his grandchildren for four generations. As we remember our Lord at this time, let us remember that He is always our hope in this life and our hope realized in death.

